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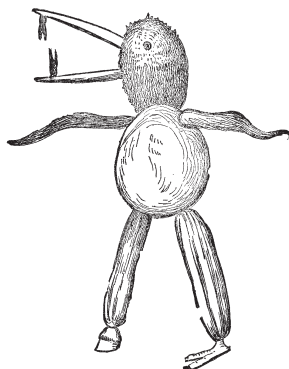


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NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE ARTS

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NATIVE OF HEAVEN

Emily Hunt

What if we had
a female president
right here on the ground
in 2014.
Would they make jokes about her blood on SNL?
Or compare her shocking term
to the spacious cycle of a lily?
Would hate or pity win?
I guess I don't want to do it
but I would like
dental insurance.
I care about my skull.
What if when I got my check
it was a decent portion
of a full year's salary
marking with the strength of math
every hour I'd spent
teaching children how to read.

Every winter in our world
I could use that money
to pay for my heat.
So sheepishly
raised by the dead
and dying men
I might step into
high hot water
and wait for spring.
Even once it drained
there wouldn't be much
space for someone else.
Opaque in my periphery
might stand steadily
the shapes of houses, settled sky,
ice crystals, concrete
grains and flowers,
clean April wind,
and my leaders, so good
at shutting doors.
What if my kid grew up in this
a little dead between the categories?

Is it not strange that man –
with the pages of history spread out before him –
is so slow to admit
the intellectual power,
the moral heroism of woman,
and her identity with himself.

If we could first know where we are
we could then better judge
what to do, and how to do it.
It will become all one thing
or all the other.

Where is the broad and generous confidence
in the efficiency of true
democratic institutions?

You cannot deny one class
the full measure of their natural rights
without imposing restraints
upon your own liberty.

These things were said by
Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Abraham Lincoln,
and Carl something a century and a half ago.
Ten years later

Lincoln's long gone clamor
went wandering to claim that
the mystic chords of memory
stretching from every battlefield
and patriot grave, to every living heart
and hearthstone, all over this
broad land will yet swell
the chorus of the Union
when again touched, as surely they will be
by the better angels of our nature,
but I don't think it happened.

A few days ago
one of my students
argued against equal pay
while I stood in front of him.

The girl to his right
apologized after class
for being such an airhead.

When I was 14, this girl my age
was raped at school
and in the morning
they announced it.

She was called a liar and a dumb slut.
She transferred and I ran into her.
Maybe she'll be president.
It might be sort of like
how it is now
except we'd have a woman show the way
while we listened to her speak.

NEAR PAGE, AZ

Elizabeth Whittlesey

Convey not grey—let in, honey, the sunlight,
the cliché—I once was lost, now I am lost,
unless you find/have found me. Map out ahead
a dark charcoal, wonderful tarmac, its dotted line
of school-bus yellow stretching straight out ahead
the way future looks in my head are you there
panting alongside me, is the sun beating down,
are we looking for water?

Tear

along the dotted line. Or hold hands across
the dotted line, across what divides us, into distance
into future. Really all I'm asking is to share
this sky with you—humidity 0%, or at least
very low (the kind I've been telling you about).
Note its purity. Note our purity of thought
because we share it—because maybe there's nothing
purer than shared experience.

Why

are you frightened by that beige figure
wrapped in solidified gauze at the side of the road?
It's just death, it's not the end of the world.
And besides, he's back anyway, here to haunt you,
here because he cares. Besides, isn't all illusion
anyway—this Sleeping Chief, these mesas and buttes,
the straw grasses shifting in the wind—aren't all
merely particles, energy, infinitesimally small pulses
of light defined only by the differences we perceive?
Still, we have to live. We still have to choose.

So be
with me. Sleep outside on our dug-out trampoline
with me when I was twelve, when I was eighteen.
Sit with me while all those others didn't call.
Sneak into Flamingo Pool with me on graduation night
when the neighborhood boys stole all our clothes
and then the police chased us. Be one of those boys,
and be there when you didn't call—those days,
hours wasted waiting for you. Apologize by
walking down this damn road with me.
Get too drunk and know what not to listen to—
what to forget, what to remember.

DOMES OF THE HIDDEN TEMPLE

James Tate

People were going about their chores. Some were eating lunch. Others, like me, were just standing around doing nothing, just taking in the scene. I saw a dozen ducks fly over low on their way to the pond. A policeman walked by swinging his club. The firemen were washing their fire truck. Margie walked out of a shoe store and saw me. She walked up to me and said, "Have you heard the news? Rosie and Larry broke up." "Why? They were the best darn couple I knew," I said. "I agree. They had everything going for them," she said. "Did you talk to her?" I said. "She says he thinks he's an armadillo. He eats insects and mud and dug a burrow in back of the house," she said. "He didn't look like an armadillo. I thought he was a very good looking guy, always very nice to me," I said. "Whatever the case, I'll miss their parties. They were always such fun," she said. "They were the best," I said. "I've got to run. Nice to see you, Tim," she said. I walked over to the drugstore and bought myself some toothpaste. When I came out, a light spring rain had started. The pigeons on the bank took off and flew in circles around the town. A man walked up to me and said, "Do you know where the Dome of the Hidden Temple is?" I said, "Yes, but I can't tell you. It's a secret." "But I'm supposed to meet somebody there," he said. "Then that person should have told you how to get there," I said. "I guess he thought I knew," he said. "Almost nobody knows," I said. "Then why do you know?" he said. "Because I am the Priest of Nothingness," I said. "Are you really?" he said. "No, I just made that up," I said. "Oh, so you're a comedian," he said. "Yes, I'm a comedian," I said. "Well, you're not very good," he said. "I know," I said.

THE RABBIT GOD

My wife said to me, "Leroy, if you want rabbit stew you're just going to have to go out there and kill a rabbit." I said, "I never said anything about wanting rabbit stew." "But you were acting like you wanted rabbit stew," she said. "I don't know what you mean by that. I was just being me," I said. "You were hopping about the living room and, naturally, I took that to mean you wanted rabbit stew," she said. "I was just excited by the big game," I said. "I don't know anything about a big game," she said. "Well, I don't either, but there's always a big game on. That's the marvel of it," I said. "I still think you want rabbit stew," she said. "I'm not killing any rabbit," I said. "Why? Are you afraid of them?" she said. "No, I'm too fond of them," I said. "I guess I'm guilty of misreading the situation. I've always thought I could tell what you were thinking. Now it seems I have been proven wrong. I have no idea what you are thinking. It could be anything. You could be thinking about musk ox or Joe Lewis or Kublai Khan or hoof and mouth disease or Eustachian tubes or Cheyenne Indians," she said. "You're exactly right. I'm thinking about all those things at once. It makes for a very jumbled experience," I said. "But I was just making those things up," she said. "So was I," I said. "How about rabbit stew?" she said. "Now that's a smoother road," I said. "Go get your gun," she said. "I don't have one," I said. "But you had one when we were married," she said. "I gave it away," I said. "What kind of man are you?" she said. "A man without a gun," I said. "Why, you're hardly a man," she said. "The rabbits think I'm their god. Peaceful and loving," I said. "Without rabbit stew you are nothing," she said.

THE

Marcella was filing her nails. She was obviously thinking about something, but I don't know what it was. I was only her husband. She shot me a look. "Would you like something, dear?" I said. "Stop looking at me like that," she said. "Some lemonade?" I said. "No, I don't want any lemonade," she said. I pretended to read my book. "Is there something bothering you?" she said. "No, I'm very much alright. Why do you ask?" I said. "You seem like you're about to go off on one of your dithering phases," she said. "Oh, you know, you wag your head up and down and your eyes go black, your tongue hangs out," she said. "I don't recall even remotely ever falling into a state like that," I said. "Well, you wouldn't. You're completely unconscious," she said. "I'm just trying to read my book," I said. "That's when it usually happened," she said. "Oh, Marcella, stop picking on me. I'm always trying to pick you up. Why do you insist on putting me down?" I said. "I would never dream of putting you down. All I was doing was describing some kind of medical condition," she said. "Let's be nice to one another. What do you say to that?" I said. "Of course, darling. I wouldn't dream of being otherwise," she said. I turned back to my book. Marcella was still filing her nails. "This is a very exciting book," I said. "You haven't read one word," she said. "Yes, I have. I read the word 'the,'" I said. "I love the word 'the,'" she said.

GHOST MOON

Kathleen Ossip

This is the light of the culture: gold and misleading.
The moon of the culture is full; its light is thick.
The moon is famous, I've read it smells like gunpowder.
The moon binds the street in ivory plastic wrap.
The streetlight does not even bother to shine tonight.
Only once a month is the moon so bright, so bright!
I absorb its rays, I'm sure they do my skin good.

The moon is no drug. It is a voyeur
Clicking the same porn links over and over.
Or—no, wait, that's me. The moon
Is that white disk up there, most definitely.
Most definitely it is poached or steamed
In a black broth of wakefulness. I eat here.
I make beds here. Here I stare at screens.

The moon is manic, it has a coin-like shape.
My eyes spiral with inattention.
The Lord God Yehovah is as vengeful as the moon,
The Goddess Devi is as nurturing.
How I, pacing the street in front of the dry cleaner's,
Would like to believe in the moon.
Or—no, wait, how I would like the moon to believe in me.

Oh. I seem to be crying, I am overstimulated.
The moon binds the bank in ivory plastic wrap.
Inside the bank, the boxes are all empty,
Mournful in the after-business hours.
They mourn for the jewelry and certificates that have vanished.
The moon sees all, the moon is seen from everywhere.
And the message of the ghost moon: I'm vast, you're vast, we've been done.

LYRIC

I.

Squirrels are eating my porch it's their world too

I call the exterminator

Every day brings filthy compromise

//

I call the vet the cat's old enough to be neutered

(Just because I'm bigger than he is
Even though he didn't ask me to take him home
Rarely do the small and mute have things the way they want them)

//

Everyone's tired of my patience my turmoil has carried me this far

EVERY DAY BRINGS FILTHY COMPROMISE

//

When I look a cow or pig in the eyes, I see a person I don't feel that
way about salmon

I have kept I have lost my religious faith I'm eating a salmon

The salmon died in terror and agony I'm eating him with a vinegar
sauce

//

You'll like what you are told to like

This we call the reality effect

So many I could love and do not so many I could kill and do not

And walk through the world wearing this white face

(w/moisturizer serums & mascara)

//

I don't know anything I observe so closely I haven't lived

I thought I knew death what did I know

Sylvia and Anne thought they knew death they didn't know anything

(Didn't know they were going to die anyway?)

//

Her body one long tube with an overgrowth in the middle

My friend to be even one more day with you.

//

(Every day brings filthy compromise.)

//

I came from salt water in August I swim in salt water

Cancer is my default horror

Fear is not the way for me now I need something bigger?

*There's a crowd of people and animals heading westward on the run
There's a pack of beasts and people heading westward on the run
Powerless under the moon powerless under the sun*

2.

Meaning is made – Wonder has no shade

(Says a placard partway down the Grand Canyon)

These dark days the clouds hide the sun.

Gravity's a bright snare

(Say I, standing on the edge of the North Rim)

To keep us locked here.

3.

At the mouth of the ravine (we are home now)
the Weckquaesgeeks camped

They fished swam collected oysters and clamshells planted corn and
possibly tobacco

We walk every day through a haunted house

//

Dear values absurd chaotic and tight,

I never want to forget how this feels I will of course forget

//

Dear values absurd chaotic and tight,

Appraisal makes me nervous aggression makes me mad is true

The reality effect is true

Her body one long tube with an overgrowth in the middle is true

I can stare and stare and still not see it (truth) is true

My life is true my death is true the ravine is true

//

I wouldn't pay slave wages I wouldn't sit down and have lunch with
THEWOMANWHOCLEANS"MY"HOUSE
without checking my texts

Modesty kindness humility acceptance these too are genius

the kinds we need now

CALM DOWN YOU'RE NOT AS SMART AS YOU THINK
YOU ARE

//

This one has no soul and that one has no soul Death is OK for some

In the summer of economic collapse in the summer of widespread
famine

(can't bear to look back have done that in last book)

I execute I exfoliate I Gothicize

//

What caused the economic collapse me so feckless and dreamy

I've been irresponsible I have no pension I will die in poverty

I'm a poetess I'll be killed and eaten I have no money

I make a beeline for the essential I think I'm so great

(Ultimate putdown of my childhood "She thinks she's so great.")

I ride a zipline over the ravine it's great

//

Dear values absurd chaotic and tight,

I think I'm so great to avoid losing light

I sit on the banks of the river the bodies of my enemies float by

(Death is OK for some)

salmon Weckquaesgeeks children I'm oblivious of

//

I don't want much I want at my best to be most loved

At my most ambitious to be most coddled

I want to be oblivious and kind

I want to be rich and humble

I want to believe in reincarnation an eternity of do-overs

and because I want to

I find the hidden sun:

*There's a crazy bright object stapled to the Western sky
There's a crown of fire bragging in the Western sky
I'll brag right along with it I am never gonna die*

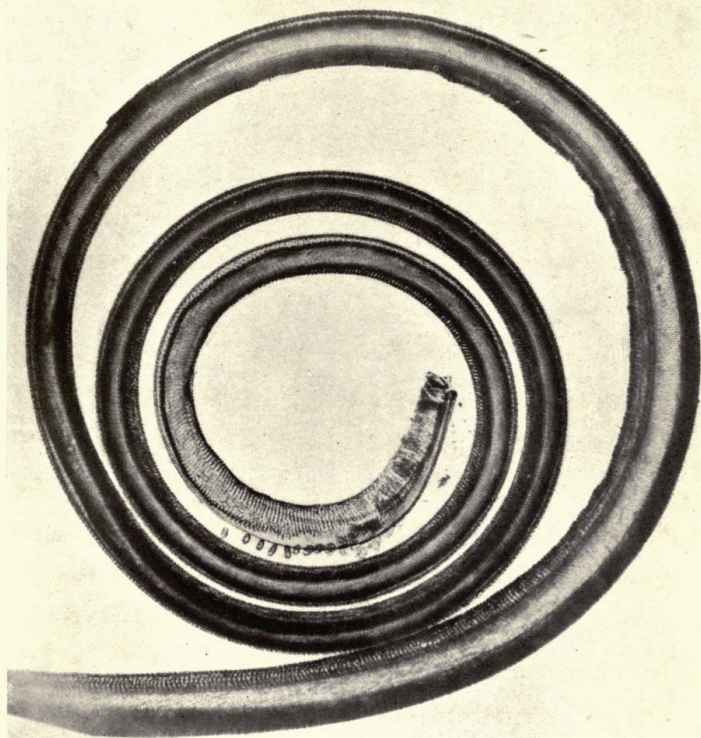


FIG. 19.
BUTTERFLY'S TONGUE.
× 50.

[to face page 80.]

SUPREME LEADER

Bianca Stone

I'm leader of the Camry, the seat cushion
the wrong turn into Jersey, an eight hour drive.

Leader of a broken porch
when Mom says "They stole my hair

and my looks and my lawnmower wheel—"

I'm leader of paranoia, bar-fly looks

in a frenzy, I stand up in the backyard
with a plastic chair, like taxidermy owls

or ferrets stand, lined up behind me—
super, still, in charge of a fleet.

O, body, body, body, body, do I have to get wasted
and say your name in the mirror all night?

I'll rise with my terrible heads tomorrow
like the dead do.

SELF-DESTRUCTION

Regarding falling asleep

waiting for my group to be called

to enter the tunnel

that would have taken me

to 26D—

nodding off, the plane left

without me

in my neck pillow

like someone in a hospital bed

completely unaware, waiting to be fixed,

indifferent to everything.

And perhaps what makes us miss things

is that once in a while

we want to stop getting what we're paying for,

a small Dostoyevskian mutiny

like buying a salad in a clear plastic box
that tastes old and poisonous
then throwing the whole thing in the trash.

Our lives are a series of
debts and payoffs that feel barely
tolerable. And anyway
whenever I walk across the sky
to go stand in line for the bathroom
I always think, finally,
I am just like a ghost
walking over the world
trying to distract myself
from boredom
and hysteria. It's a kind of
a holy moment
that is filled with anger.

THE FATES

I cracked open my skull and out flew mom.

She alit in the rafters, electric in a massive chamber.

She has abilities accessed by latent genes.

Quietly terrible powers come

with great responsibility—which

you don't have to use—either way one still

has the power,

a few lives to fuck up, to

wreck or save—

wind chimes won't let go of me.

I ring whenever I move.

I feel like the *Titanic* sailing straight

into the liquor store on Saint Marks and Franklin.

I'm watching a TV show

about supernatural detective brothers

who travel back and forth across the United States
revenging their parents' deaths
until they can't remember anymore why or how they died
in general
the need to kill demons and vampires
overtakes their need
to remember anything.

And who can blame them?

Every night in the hotel the two talk indirectly about their feelings—
manly men, massive in sex appeal, drinking
and killing and talking.

In this episode the Services of Fate are no longer required in the human
world.

Thus, everything in the future is affected.

In this reality

I know my brother is living near me,

so close

I can wave from my window

into his.

He's telling me he's writing a poem

about the way

the face disappears.

AN INTERVIEW WITH GILLIAN CONOLEY

During the spring and summer of this year, Gillian Conoley and Seth Landman wrote back and forth on the occasion of the publication of Gillian Conoley's most recent book, *Peace* (Omnidawn, 2014). During the course of this conversation, City Lights released (in September) *Thousand Times Broken*, Conoley's translation of three books by the French poet Henri Michaux. Conoley and Landman talk about *Peace* in particular and about the particularities of poetry in general.

Gillian Conoley is the author of seven collections of poetry, including *Peace*, *The Plot Genie*, *Profane Halo*, *Lovers in the Used World*, and *Tall Stranger*, a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. A poet, editor and translator, Conoley has taught as a visiting writer at University of Denver, the Iowa Writers' Workshop, Tulane University, and Vermont College. Her translations of three books by Henri Michaux will appear in City Lights series this year. Editor and founder of *Volt* magazine, she is Professor and Poet-in-Residence at Sonoma State University and lives in the San Francisco Bay Area.

In "Begins," the final sequence of Peace, there's tension between abstraction and representation as possibilities for what we're seeing all around us. There's a related tension between what passes in front of us and what we are willing to see. All of this has me wondering how the idea of empathy—or maybe more simply just the way in which a person tries to be a good person to the people around her—figures for you into the larger idea of peace you have taken as the title of this collection.

Could you talk more about abstraction/representation regarding what passes in front of us and what we are willing to see (I would add *can see*) to this and its relation to empathy for you? I don't mean to answer a question with a question but I think that's interesting.

Well, in "Begins," there's a family. The word family feels like an abstraction, but then there are the actual people in the family, and you have to account for them. It's easier to empathize with a face than an abstraction. The last line of the book is "I imagine my life," and imagining can be a really lonely activity, something you do on your own, but the imagination is also full of other people, and you love them. It feels like a great gift to be able to imagine oneself into a state of empathy, to move toward accepting people as they are.

Oh, I see. Yes, there's a family in that poem and in the book—this family comes from my thinking about peace and war now and then—so there's a time mix between immediate and extended family. At any rate, my father was a marine, a World War II war hero who won a silver star, he was only twenty-two, and then later was very much opposed to the Vietnam War, which was full force as I came of age. In the book I am thinking about peace and war as ideas/concepts and also thinking about them generationally—my father's generation, my own generation, and my students' and daughter's generation. So there is a lot of cross-pollination generationally/imagistically throughout the book and within individual poems. On what on earth Peace is. Time is then and now. What really spurred the book was my realization that I'd been staring into the faces of people who had never lived without war their entire lives.

But let's get back to your idea of abstraction and empathy and their relation. I think some of this has to do with memory, which has a complicated, usually nefarious relation to truth. Memory comes to us and lives in us through the senses and we tend to populate it with detail, or the brain often springs it back to us through detail, through the concrete, how you say it's

“easier to empathize with a face than an abstraction.” This would go for both individual and collective memory, but let’s not get too far afield. The French filmmaker Jean Rouch said something about truth that might be useful for us, “I think here there are two kinds of truths: dramatic truth and documentary truth in the actual.” By dramatic truth I take him to mean the kind of “truth” one can find in art. In this book there is a tension between abstraction and the representational (as visual artists use the terms) maybe because of a mistrust of memory in both the individual and collective experience. How this connects to empathy—maybe that has something to do with how we as human beings can have no idea of what it is to be another person, what another person’s life feels like inside them—so empathy must remain abstract as many feelings/emotions are? But no less present in the abstract.

I very much love the actual world. However I distrust worlds that are constructed completely out of concrete detail that is arranged to make me see or feel a particular way. This comes not only from being a writer but also from having once been a reporter and journalist. I also am more and more intrigued with a sense of the worlds around us we have only a glimpse of, the perceptual faculties that seem to go undeveloped in our consciousness—the mystics, the visionaries, the great vastness of the human imagination in all fields.

It occurs to me that the act of remembering has this strangeness embedded into it. The past is in the past, but we remember it in the present, in our present-day bodies and brains. So memory is subject to human error the way any activity might be. In making a mistake, you might create something that never existed. You could find peace where there was something much different, or vice versa. When you are writing, do you find yourself trying to remember, or do memories just occur to you? Is remembering a visionary act? A fleshing out of what may have been a fleeting glimpse?

Is remembering a visionary act? That's a good question. I would say so. It projects one into another space other than the time/space one is currently in. But it's a vision, wouldn't you say? Completely constructed by you and your brain. Maybe the stage set has some of the actual: a particular table was there, a certain object. Projecting into the future is also visionary. Humans seem to have an awfully hard time staying in the present. What's that quote by Pascal? "All of humanity's problems seem to stem from our inability to sit quietly in a room alone"? Yet that's what writers do. Hence, the visions!

Does poetry allow you to "sit quietly in a room alone"? That rings true for me; when I'm writing, I'm existing in the present. Last night I was talking to my friend Lewis Freedman (he's a poet, too) on the phone, and we were discussing how writing can allow you to make sense of your life, but the flip side of that is perhaps feeling a bit untethered when one is away from the practice of writing for a little while. Is it like this for you? I'm not trying to suggest that writing and existing are different, exactly, but I am wondering: how does your writing process fit into your existence?

I've come to see it as a practice. I like to have about three hours a day when I can get that, but that is luxurious. Still, it's always what I prefer, it began as a habit when I first started to write, that time frame—Life is a mess and poetry lends itself to being worked on in small spurts, too, so I've learned to go with that when I have to. Now I am trying to create a daily practice, no matter what. There is a lot of what. So smaller time can be worked with when the three hours is impossible. The trance-like quality of time-space, losing oneself in that, is a very delicious part of writing. I like writing two or three poems at the same time. Sometimes they fall into one another, but most often not. I like the feeling of a poem feeling "done" but then I immediately start to miss the particular trance of it, wherever I got to be with it. Whatever existence was permitted me through writing it.

Writing is a chance for other layers of existence. I just finished a translation of three books by Henri Michaux. The opportunity to inhabit or find one's way through another consciousness was both thrilling and full of struggle. This project was on the back burner for about five years, so there was a back and forth with that just as there is a back and forth with the two to three poems in the cooker. For a while I was lonely for Michaux once I was done but now I think of him as someone who gifted me with a sort of companionship. A ghostly friend who let me in. I liked the stretch of it—the escape—

I love that your answer came around to the gift of companionship. It's easy sometimes in conversations about writing to get bogged down in the aloneness inherent in the act, but if we are talking about ghosts and visions, it seems pretty clear to me that ultimately these are forms of companionship. Translation is such a beautiful example of this. It is so difficult to communicate, and translation can be this wonderful gift; you help someone span some mysterious distance, one person to another. You are a conduit. It is invisible and mystical. Poetry itself can feel like an act of translation—taking some interior thing and fashioning it out of words.

The way you talk about missing the “particular trance” of a poem feels viscerally to me like the way a person might describe missing a place. Ghosts, too, might inhabit places in a way that exists outside of any reasonable conception of physical space. I'm thinking now about the first time I met you, which was in your office at Sonoma State in the fall of 2002. I showed up for the first meeting of my independent study, and we talked for a while, and got around to talking about western Massachusetts. When I was leaving, you offered me an old rug you were getting rid of. You said you had gotten it in Northampton. You told me it was a magic carpet. I don't know why I remember this, except that I had just left Massachusetts for really the first time, and that rug felt important to me. It brought me back home. I must have needed it. I kept it for a long time, even as it was falling apart.

When I'm writing, I find myself visiting these places—actual, real ones—in my mind. I'm driving down a highway, or I'm sitting in a chair in a room somewhere, etc. Where do you go when you are making a poem?

That *was* a magic carpet. I remember when I got it, which must have been something like thirty years ago, it was already really old then, worn down to the threads of its origin, but it still had these gem-like colors that it retained, a ruby and a cobalt and a kohl. It was old and fine. You could tell at one time it had a rich, fine plush. Led several, probably many lives before it had you and me. I'm glad you kept it a long time. Poets are great companions, I've noticed. Live ones become lifelong friends. Place seems to instantly connect people. I think there is no better thing, no prize or award or whatever, that is better than when you feel the appreciation/connection of your peers and fellow poets. It is difficult work to be in it for the long haul, all those years of going to the desk and pushing words around, as arduous as it is joyful, and poets begin to recognize that and honor that with one another the longer they practice the art.

Where do I go when I am making a poem? Depends on the poem. In *Peace*, I was thinking about what it felt like, generationally, to be in a country not engaged in war. My students have never known anything but war, while I had about a ten-year period between World War II and Vietnam, though the Cold War was very, very present, in an abstract and scary way, the ducking under desks and hatred of “them big bad Russians,” as Ginsberg said. So in this book I was in three places at once: the present, trying to imagine what “peace” is; in my personal past time of coming of age during Vietnam; and in another past that was my father's—his generation had a sense of peace from the end of World War I to beginning of World War II, roughly twenty years, unimaginable now! What was that like? In a review someone commented how time felt like it had tentacles that stretched forward and backward in the book—often within the same poem. The present is hard. It is so quickly the future. It seems like “the present,”

which is so difficult to actually feel or be in, so quickly is it gone—Stein, our great master of it—that hinging present to the future a bit might be one way to experience it—to know you’re right here, though here comes the next and the next moment, a fluidity.

Something I noticed throughout Peace was this sense of a difference in quality between, for instance, saying “thank you” and thanking someone, feeling in love and being in love, etc. In “A Healing for Little Walter” there’s this moment of thinking about “what touch is to someone alone.” These moments have a bit of the quality you were just mentioning—that the experience of the present has something to do with its fluidity with all of the coming moments. The present is so small and precious and impossible to hold in the mind. This fluidity of time has me thinking of evaporation, how water exists in a cycle and is always leaving and then coming back again.

In “A hatchet with which to chop at the frozen seas inside us,” you write “what if paradise was only lifting the veil to flirt.” In “My Mother Moved My Architect” you write, “I am not through / being a poet or a being.” I love that. In the first poem in the book you mention “the feeling of being embodied by the person / you love, or are sweet on, enchanted by,” and then there’s this moment where you imagine being them looking at you being them, and you make this declaration, “I am still beautiful.” The present is where all of this happens, right? It’s gone so quickly, but isn’t that why we have the poem?

With all the time entanglements in the book the present kept coming back, the poems wanted to be in the present and so that became one of the central concerns of the book—how war and peace are copresences in the present, but the present is so inextricable/complicated by all that went before it and is about to happen, all of which becomes even further complicated with the projection/perception of one consciousness within the fluid activity of time. I’m not so sure about people, but poems can live in the instant. I love the ones that do that—like Creeley’s “Something” when a lover is

peeing in a sink and Creeley writes, “What love might learn from such a sight”—that poem seems to live right in that moment, as alive as when it was written. I love the poem as a form. It is willing to go anywhere with you and has enormous plasticity in the sense of flexibility—it seems to accept time exceptionally well and allow its practitioners a great deal of mobility.

It’s exciting to consider these feelings about what poems want to do and what they are willing to do. Would you mind saying a bit more about what you mean by mobility? That word feels so full of possibilities for me in this context.

The poem just gives us a lot of room to move in. Juxtapositions, time leaps, ranges of diction, image and sound. I think especially given that in the poem (depending on the poet) there is quite often a sense of the page as field or canvas or place, or there can be. The poem as form allows that. When we read novels, for example, we expect the page to behave while the narrative enthralls us. So most often in fiction the page as a material is neutral. There are exceptions to this: John Dos Passos, Georges Perec, James Agee, even. Sebald. But these are tame in comparison to, say, Mallarmé’s “A Throw of the Dice Does Not Abolish Chance,” or Dickinson. But even in poetry in traditional form, there are of course stanza breaks, caesuras, etc., so one could argue that in poetry, no matter what the time period, the page is really never neutral. In and of itself, poetry’s page is a lively active place, and this allows or invites a high acceptance of movement within it. Whether this movement be delicate or volatile, poetry accommodates it all, and seems to be quite pliable, resilient, and open.

I love that—the idea of poems as places again. So often when I go back and visit poems I’ve written, even though I can remember making them, I also feel like I’m a visitor in them.

I wanted to ask you, finally, about your use of the word you. The first poem of yours that I ever read was “The Sky Drank In” from Lovers in the Used

World. I read it in *The Best American Poetry* 1997, where it was selected by James Tate. He had been your teacher, and later he was mine. The ending of that poem (“o one, o no one, o you—”) stuck with me for a long time—the way “you” can be so full of longing for another person while also somehow being a way of talking to oneself. In *jubilat* 7, you had a poem called “Native” that later appeared in *Profane Halo*; that poem seems to me to speak to a similar relationship. It ends:

as in who am I to write this, who

Who who is speaking most whoever-ly,

Who, you are pale

though always

you are social.

As ever, it is water from a spring

to walk with you

*Of course, in all of these instances, a reader might feel like she has been addressed as well. Right in the first poem of *Peace*, you write, “Can you tell if this is the good part, / you can tell if this is the good part / if it is the part looking back at you.” I love the truth in that—the fearlessness and generosity. I’m fumbling around a question here, but perhaps you could talk a bit about your feelings about the second person pronoun and its emotional potential?*

Whoa. Now that’s a question. Pronouns are complicated. Right away I think of that line of Creeley’s that goes “As soon as/I speak, I/speaks. . .” and the whole sense of disappointment in that, in not being able to escape

the narcissism or self-loathing or self-aggrandizing that goes on with the “I” as perpendicular pronoun. “You” can be a command or accusation or entreaty, but it can also be the great call across the void to another, to “the other,” to the beloved.

In the first two mentions you’ve got here, in “The Sky Drank In” and in “Native,” the you is a glimpse of “the other” that one might experience while writing. It’s a very mysterious aspect of writing when one experiences this—the glimpses outside of oneself through the making of art. One hopes the reader has this experience, too. It isn’t so much a negation of self as it is a reaching out to others within and outside.

Especially over the last fifty years or so and then of course in modernism with Eliot’s great essay on impersonality there has been prodigious thought about “the self” and its pitfalls in writing and in life. However one may want to negate a kind of self-regard or self-aggrandizement or self-loathing in one’s writing, one still has to walk around and be a person, with duties/responsibilities to other people, we all have a beginning and an end. We do exist, there’s no getting around that. And who would want to? The world is beautiful, being alive is exquisite. We are killing the planet, one another, money is our ruler, corporate entities are so powerful we can only make small, daily actions against them. We all know this and there’s no need to preach or drone (scary pun) on about it here. But maybe “you” as a pronoun is one of those small acts that reaches outward and above. “I” make art for “you.” “I” see “you.”

THE LONG MARRIAGE

Gillian Conoley

If it is true that I, you, don't exist but we are in it

for the eternity, for the once

in the pink-orange blazing dawn I put on

your black underwear.

Doing there, in my drawer,

stunned/pleased at the hip-fit,

years to a bus you jumped out of

in your duct-taped boots (there was snow),

you were so happy to be coming to see me

I saw you from the window's

vectored frost, a brown feathery

hen, here to roost, though you

were the male. Now the white birch drifts

a thousand motes back into the house

to eat off our dust and fly.

We sire and wench, harmony and ash
until conversation, consumption,
interrogation, and the small back of the sweet talk

become so paradisaical, primitive, warped
I fall into the lace of your gutter,
pretty nice there,
and we have to wire prose into the talk to get the poem,
to get the rope that runs long and free
out the cave. Mastodon-like to crawl on all fours to birth
some intelligibles.

Got a grease fire in the kitchen for a long time coming.
Couples forming a rustling seriality
up city hall's granite steps'
nightlong cormorant moon, 20 pairs of black underwear in a superbag
be-lit with break
of dawn's exalt

as when media hyper-glosses our lives but not as bad
as your mom and dad, and we think of
our dreams with their heterodoxy and did I tell you mine or dream it
the lava-like tar

congealing into blue-black bubbles in asphalt
we could pop with each step.
Sissy Spacek and Martin Sheen in the movie of our first
date both so young all they could do was kick thoughtlessly at the dirt
and kill everyone in their wake
but us. Spacek's short shorts her child-like, almost woman-like
legs. Sheen's cigarette pack folded back into the sleeve of his T-shirt,
we rose/stumble/found each
other's hands up the aisle pitch dark
and stood before the turn lights
turning jade green water. If anoint is a drop of oil
on our foreheads, if one by one alteration finds,
we toss our hair down a tower

for longer arousal. We want to be seen in the eyes of the government.
If marriage is Empire's locket
we get in bed like students to its sheets
though we hate the acquisition and the light moves.
How many instances of unity feel more like
bicycles attached to cars.
But that was your dream.
I get on the bus going nowhere in particular,

sit in sun for the warm.

The bus heaves sideways before lurching

down our street crowded (it is Wednesday) with the Episcopalian's

AA meeting's

cars, each shining, obediently

parked. Luck, its inexact clarity.

Soft as tracing paper the house lay

loose linoleum,

carpet, tile and oak for surfaces

to pace, parse, backtrack.

If this is the hallway

where a savage tiger with stitches mends itself and runs.

We cannot occupy it absolutely, ion, eon.

If this is the vertigo of another.

One song alone, one spinet,

many breezes, firmament, and water.

The psalm and plasm in the particulars

of the jungle where we walk to see it snow.

If we are so angry

If we are so happy.

If no eye contact. The wind tears hard at it.

A WRECK

Seth Landman

We started with sinking, and wherever
we came up for air, we felt mistaken.
“I don’t think I’m breathing,” I said. “Something
isn’t right.” Historians assured me
everything was normal. I saw through their
ruse through the rain and all kinds of weather,
so I came out feeling about the same.
The rest of my childhood I spent drowning
ghosts in bathtubs, waiting for the sunrise,
and in later years was a known hider
of foodstuffs in attics. Around the town
my flashlight saw little creatures going
about the work of decomposition,
an ocean between the future and past.

PIONEERS

We are pioneers, uh oh, we are lost.
The past was flexible until we mapped
its parameters, and then that was it,
and we regretted what we knew, to say
nothing of the not knowing we had lost.
This is just to explain how it will feel
in the future, everything established,
a breeze coming off warm summer waters
into the soft hair of our descendants,
to explain the way the moon looks tonight,
the weird music of the bugs marking time
for us wherever we might get settled.
It's how I feel when I miss you, you, you,
you, you. How I feel now, now, now, now, now.

SMALL REVOLUTION

Having is hard to hold. It's hard to hold
the night. Your name can't possibly be right.
A needle right in a haystack beyond
all human reasoning, or according
to it, like history's milky, weird stars.
Our stupid galaxy can make the room,
and if it gets better, can make it spin.
So, the spinning can describe you, or it
makes the night feel long, and you hope it's gone
in the morning. It was a dream. A mouth
in the world was really some earthquake you
thought you felt, and checked all the measurements,
but no, that's it, it's right there inside you,
a lake with a heartbeat, an uprising.

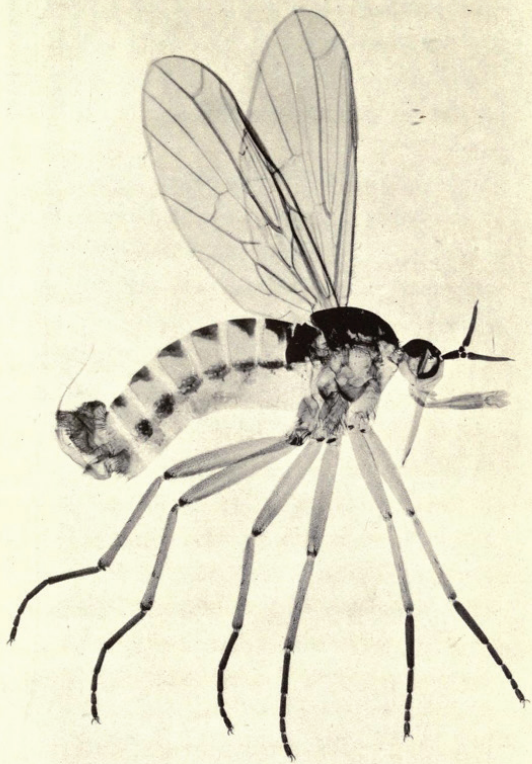


FIG. 27.
RHYNGIA.
× 18.

[to face page 96.

BLUE ANGEL

Monica McClure

My blue angel comes to me
after the sanitation trucks

and asks

what drugs I need
while she's in the neighborhood

Her finger waves are waxen
and her cupid-bow is stamped on

I say I want to be so sped up
that my jaw swells shut

my body becomes negligible
and the world purely a dimension
peopled with bilious gestures

All modes of desire are simulated anyway
So

Don't feed me any duds
about poems
not being dialogical

Because I know a poem by

how much it sounds like
or doesn't sound like

one of its precursors
So

I don't actually need to feel anything at all
except that I live on a wavy plane

among artists
It's a middle ether of baby's breath
or little cuntfaces in the violet nightshade

and I do expect to be applauded
if I say this right
So

can you please
give me a compliment today
starting with YOU ARE

You are not much of a caretaker
Blue angel of unctuous balm

I don't know why I try
my charlatans at your oaken desk

and talk to you about intellectual things
Blue angel
you're like a worldly older girl

who took me on spring break
and locked me in a tower

with a *Real World* cast member

Why do we still use the language
of Feudalism

on the internet
An icon (<icon>)

Blue Angel remember

You are to be a well-uttered fuck
that disrupts my desire for coherence

I'm trying to unify my affects
and privilege none

Radha waiting for Krishna in the garden
The bridegroom waiting for Christ

These walls of my serfdom I wait half-dosed
ladling cream in my own lap

In a civilization that has lost its purpose
I try to think of metaphor
as a paradoxical truth

I believe in beauty
If metaphor is truth
and truth is beauty

then I'm a Christian

Ok

I wouldn't call myself a thinker
But I feel as if this world is wrong

has been from the beginning
Since the underground was made dirty

and the sky throne erected
This is why Bataille gave us the Acephale
Cut off the head to let the humors
hose through

The female passions unplugged from
their social vocation

and sprayed at the heavens like
animal elimination

Probably wasn't Collette's idea
to sleep with the enemy
Yet we must

But of course there's no way to know
what it was really like in the first place

What if all my thoughts are deferred action
My girl lovers Blue Angel

I didn't like when she left a pink carnation
in my mailbox

I hate men
So why would I date someone who acts
like one

All the destruction caused by these
little castrated monsters
makes you think

Who is picking up the pieces

Women
are the only human beings

You Blue Angel of pharmaceuticals
have gone wrong too

For a very long time
you have led sheep to slaughter

and hooked rising starlets in your cane
dragging them out of vaudeville
for good

Rub your acrid powder
on my gums

I'm moulting on the trapeze bar
while you make
my decisions

All season I've been
rehearsing in my sequins

while the other carnies have gone
to rural Italy
in the wagon of a muscular sadist

17th century blue
You are offering me chicken
feathers for wings

So I may taste the zeal
in my throat when I fall
and break my neck
in front of a million men marching

I can't say I don't deserve it

One Christmas morning
I woke up wearing
a belly chain restraint

A woman was singing
about black lacquered coffins

Blue angel
I'm a natural nurturer

So if you won't take care of me
I will make you my infant

A shaman said if I hate myself I can't
believe in happiness

but I disagree

Oh transcendentalists
at the organic farm

Happiness is not a condition
It's a calling

Go into big oil
Get the most out of life

Eagle ford was like literally an ocean
under our feet

My blue angel
you poisoned me
with false hope

<icon>

Because I must inherit a role
you can put me underneath whoever

I'll respect the privacy
of our patrons

And someday
the Lords will share their kingdom

I am not entitled to protection
No
I have to work for it

<icon>

I was given a child
as a “karmic learning lesson”

in need versus desire

for all I know...

Now I finally feel
as if I deserve nothing

I force my utility upon
this tiny babe

Nipples and introductions
to the symbolic order
This is important

He grew into a boy
with bad vision
and grotesque bone structure

He checked payphones for change
and pick-pocketed the poor

As a crooked twenty-something
he joined ALEC

took my money and never
gave me tax advice

Long ago in the village
we would

build up those around us

That's where I'm coming from

I built a treehouse of palm fronds for junkies
But he's not like me

Am I regarding him narcissistically
this child who regards me
narcissistically

It's terrible to bleed and not die
like some game hunter's chimera

I'm haunted again
by girlhood hallucinations

The black bull who walked on two legs
pacing the porch

Blue angel
come back and pill me
what can take the edge off

To the extent that I did not become
the black bull with red eyes
I became a woman

Judith Butler my son castrates me
on an imaginary schedule
I hate him

Men can't structurally see
women
We just loom like shadowy shrieks
in the entrance

the way Euripides proclaimed it
My child takes
the gentle on all fours

You angel of order
give me back the blue lethargy
my tourniquet of depression

the superego
if you will

The meek are not born that way

Their cars are
wrecked repossessed impounded

Objects of desire and identification
repeatedly lost

This is the dark side of environmentalism

You punish it for leaving
But there really are

no exits
Nothing is extinguished

Ann Coulter Phyllis Schlafly
you will sit at the children's table
in heaven

Richard II you wish
your name could be blotted out

from the book of life

Such a social thing to say
Did you ever think of anal rape
by a bull

or reading fiction to feel
more like yourself

Blue angel
You were right to explode
this shitshow

into drama

<icon>

No Title

Ben Estes

That this mountainside looks like a face is accidental,
which is a shame, for I dearly love to laugh.
The touch-smoothed redwood cross-section, in its rings
of growth and brightness,
seems like a sun seen from underwater,
wobbly as jelly, mocking my
inability to find a job, my food stamps,
and saddens me to see
the teens tagging themselves in nearby places
to earn a virtual friend's respect, or boasting
other symptoms of youth while leaving
their greasy fingerprints on the thick lenses of my glasses,
mocking my desire for artwork
to remain packed in straw, and in music
for sleepers halfway awake to grow wild in.

It all gives me faith in arranging, I guess,
when there is nothing else I seem much good at but fuss
and copy and paste, with a head full of so many other worries.
Got a check today. Bought a book I can't read
without it putting me to sleep
with its out-of-date luxuriousness.

So instead of reading it, I stayed up and listened to Harry Partch's song
And on the Seventh Day Petals Fell in Petaluma,
dedicating it to the memory of Ramon Novarro,
hoping it would arch electrically above him
with all the characteristics of fire

all night,
all day,
and soak his early spring colors in a late autumn
sun as pale as silver and fern-green skies

to draw light
through midnight

and steer instead his valley's vista
toward my own simple neighborhood loneliness
with nothing better to do than lie back and lecture
those cultured Internet boys
on their own death's primitive and permanent cartoons,
to walk carefully and not step on any snails,
the poor,
the rough skin bundles,
or shiny boners poking out from satin robes.
This light, is dark.
And on the seventh day petals fell on Petaluma,
forgiving those who hurried past before
stuffed with poo and feathers underneath the hot yellow heat
that I wish would ignite all the unopened envelopes
piling up on the table by my front door,
(and burn up all of the time I've spent
on all of the things I can't
put my finger toward).

I went for a walk this evening
and found a speckled turkey egg
where the river settled
into the mud of the salt flats.
I looked at the burnished iris

of the eye of a trout.
A gleaming Atlantic coin.
Thinking even the wind tonight could speak,
blowing in seeds not yet caught
on the coat of the dog. Still, life.
And all the needs in this world.

THE SELECTED TEXTS OF 12:34

The one hundred layers
of this onion and
the one hundred figures
made with this string can
explain how rock
can grow over rose
and how the games
of patience can teach us
to find an alright way
to feel a little lonesome
breathing in other's snores
and familiar crotches
in another's home zone
while taking pictures
sent for me to see
while I make soup for friends
labeled "QT" or an eye-roll
without having to say
much of anything
although selfishly not caring
being back home here and
how bored you'd be
of me for the night
is with you now in LA
without having much of anything
to even be able to imagine
after California'd brought you so much
fertile yarn to tie off of
winter to leave me nurturing
our calcified flowers

and choosing to not ask
while others keep on
asking and responding I'm not sure
being neither farmer nor botanist
while this still-point of Estes Gate
has parts as moldy as an old rock
though still fawn with downy skin
inside my pocket
around the fruit
the curious ivy curls
having no idea why
to not let it keep climbing
as it's not quite capable
of rotting out completely
and I guess it can still remind
of the paused summer that fed it
where all breaths were deep
and tails held erect while splashing
around in the welcome news

GOD SHE IS BLACK

Morgan Parker

Changed their names before each census my
ancestors never called me the right words.

So much bourbon in the records. Slurred
southern, unwitting daughters becoming

accident. I want to chew the color
of your skin, for you to be filled-up

body with a middle name. Please ignore
the difference between the blue grass I

grew from and the young lawn
of hair I symbolize to you.

Don't smoke in bed is the name of a course
I am teaching now in Bedstuy and other valleys

where bodies are lustrous and shiny, where
men are: bad movies, excuses, retrogrades.

Now I only trust the New Moon. My stupid
wonder is a prayer, green and hieroglyphic.

In the patterned curtains, I see my grandfather
dozing, still lit. Mother sweeps ashes, warns

with wide eyes, sucked lips *this*
is who we are. I seem to understand every planet.

The god I know speaks to me like hot tar—all
tongues, Miles Davis as Malbec. What happens

at night is stars disappear, rules are simple
and easy to break. Leaves on the trees are

golden church hats—waving hello,
wasting themselves in canary glaze.

When you can't sleep, whisper your name.
You will become other people.

It will become holy.

FANCY GAP

Rachael Katz

This is that recurring dream: the morning.

Custodian of glitter two ways
keeper of the world's own
curio cabinet of toilet seat art.

Imagine the Pope
we must. Imagine

the ceremonial naming of the breakfast pastries
at Au Bon Pain. Why not adopt a skull
with wings? Why not
adopt some kid with braces or spacers
the downed phonelines of metro-ortho
astral projection?

We must imagine men
wearing pearls
if we can.

We must hang together in our chrysalis
between the friendless poles or drown
in premium soysauce. We must imagine
better endings for women. Better
endings for the miniature golf course
than "this baby deer has a twelve-point
rack" and standing water.

Our eyes like fish have
no second thoughts (so
up yours snorkel up
yours). We give birth
to a child of sugarless gum
more gray and more blue
than a pale tin of
magenta. We call him
Hunting Accident or
“the invention of mauve.”

Why not make an unexpected residue
to send to opera school? We imagine
distributing ourselves in glass
envelopes hardboiled.

When we ask an actress to come in and cry
for all the digressions from the human body
we must be able to imagine her saying
No Thankyou.

BEDSIDE READING

Adam Fitzgerald

If Gerard Manley Hopkins was a porn star, his name would be
Immortal Diamond.

If Robert Frost was a porn star, his name would be Sentence Sounds.

If Christina Rossetti did hardcore dyke stuff, her website would be
GoblinMarket.com.

If Wilfred Owen cruised on Craigslist, his subject line would be
"Strange Meeting."

If Tennyson put on a drag show, it would be called *All Danaë to the Stars*.

If anyone still read James Joyce, he would be mentioned in this poem.

If Charlotte Mew was a lascivious sex act, it would be called Charlotte
Mew.

If Virginia Woolf didn't put stone in her pockets, she wouldn't have
drowned.

If Edmund Wilson was caught pill-popping, panty-sniffing, you'd
reread *Axel's Castle*.

If Kafka really liked to fuck animals, were they cockroaches, dung
beetles, or some other type of household vermin? I'd like to know.

If anyone has heard of or read deeply in John Skeleton's work, please
raise your hand.

If Edward Said ever had a rim job, wouldn't we ask by whom?

If Garcia Lorca wasn't such a raging queer, then why did he read Walt
Whitman?

If Walt Whitman had tons of sex during his lonely existence, why did
he die in Camden?

If Gertrude Stein was shaped like a tank, which of her treads would
you prefer to die under?

If William Blake was a chronic masturbator, which angels presided?

If William Butler Yeats gave great head, would that stop the Irish
Rebellion?

If someone is reading the early poems of James Agee tonight in
Minnesota, let us sleep.

If *Every Force Evolves A Form*, then congratulations.

If Vermeer was born in Bosnia, that would be pretty fucked up.

EVERYMAN'S OPERA

Why does my hand lie to me
tell me just where to report to
teach lesson with bald tongue
have me harangue back rain?

Trumpets of plainness quilt
former impressions of SAD
have me swan-dive in a room
so preeminent by thousands.

Still, the medium luck orbits
my united enduring self on a
feeling sofa chair implushed
with cast-iron boy fish-eyed

for once. An auditorium couldn't
fathom this hunk of \$600 glass
the dealer bid, siblings inimical.
Twins carted through Chicago.

Having one's puncture made when
one's well unaware of it (officious,
burlesque) even back home counts.
Aboard *Tritona* are village lamps.

PRISM

Jon Ruseski

I closed my eyes

And the wind blew

What happens when we die?

The world is a vampire

This assignment to fail

Dripping with the fluid of the movies

I stained the map

Left the pins in for years

Then moved each flower

Everything changes

Privacy settings, the century

There is a very old reason why

Hold your ear to the poem

Can you remember all of your love

Even the time it was only a pair of earrings?
Between me and the past, the past is more muscular
Who have I been?
Among all this beeping
Licking the cobwebs just to taste them
Shivering
Letting my hair grow
Not quite ready to leave
Hammock strung between my heart and the light
Breathe, breathe in the air
No one knows the final score
I'm hungover, therefore I am
The violent 6:37 a.m. colors
It's hard to think time goes anywhere at all
Love is a burning thing
Feelings are chemicals augmented by chemicals

The limits of sadness

The angle at which the sun hits

And other symptoms of my dollars

Sheer media

This spinning planet

Soft as VHS tape

The only use for your body is to be in the world

Spill perfume all over

Kick at a wall until a mountain comes out

There are so many nights I don't remember

What happens in your blood when every star is pulling at once?

What in your life has been like skipping stones?

I never wanted to own things

Becoming old is becoming hard in your ways

When to rely on mystery

When to put blood in a jar

Counting seems so ridiculous
But I do it too
How conventional yearning can be
I prefer witching hours
Incense on my breath
Sensations the shape of the sky
You can always be led farther away
What a wave does
What I wanted when I wanted you
A silly little entropy
Centered on Virgo options
Next time something ends say thanks for the song
Cast your ankh deep in the mud
You are the ocean previously
Everything on the earth has been
Made from materials on the earth

No matter how many skulls I've seen
Death still isn't real
Machines are flawed
So are good people
Days fit in squares or circles
Less than the size of your youth
I never found it, that feeling I had
But sloshed in the residue
Carried its heft on my back
The dizzying space after my body is excuse enough
To keep coming into this world
With obsessions that rip my jeans
Grabbing at the numbers
Trying to be the sun
When things seem fatal I return in the town where I grew up
Daylight kisses my old bedrooms

The bones tighten
The hours fill your mind until they all fit
Between the sorcery and rain
I couldn't tell you how it happens
Sometimes loss is too dull
So it makes sense
To fall into something else
Or buy a new wardrobe
Maybe it's impossible, to get it all in
Before a cloud carries me away
And now the humming
One ripple, then four thousand
Has silence ever hurt you like that?
I wish I knew where they came from
Those brilliant gaps
Releasing phosphor

Like taking your shirt off

A fierce anthropomorphic habit of the dust

That bend in the graph

Saying hold the match

Divide by zero

If all that's left is the total wound of wanting

And an American voice

Call it childhood briefly again

Pharaonic chairs waiting at my kitchen table

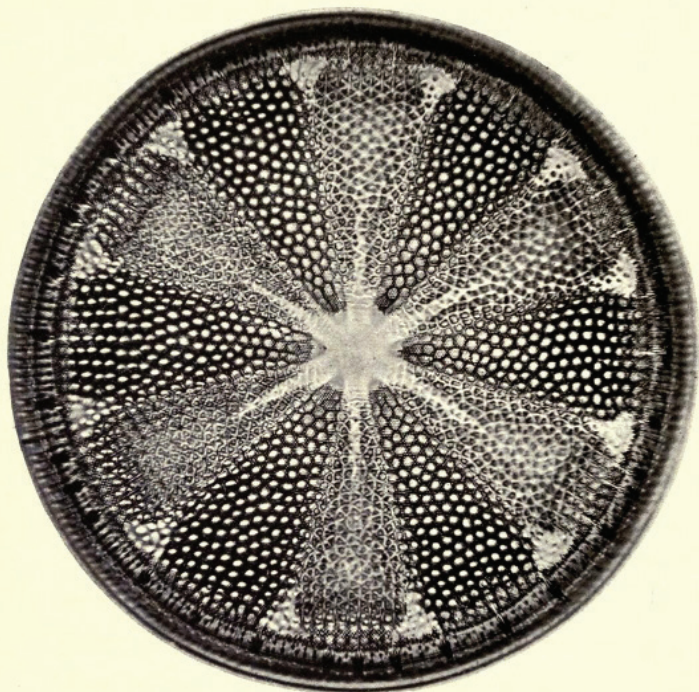


FIG. 3.
DIATOM, HELIOPECTA METIL.
× 350.

[to face p. 7.]

PORTRAIT OF ETHERIDGE KNIGHT IN THE STYLE OF A CRIME REPORT

Terrance Hayes

PORTRAIT OF ETHERIDGE KNIGHT IN THE STYLE OF A CRIME REPORT: PART I

C R I M E	RELATED REPORTS Yes, you should run down Knight's criminal records. Readers will be especially interested in the circumstances under which he first was imprisoned.	ADDITIONAL OFFENSES LISTED IN NARRATIVE During a visit home to Mississippi Knight claims to have broken into the office of a doctor, possibly a dentist, to acquire drugs. It is unclear what drugs Knight obtained. The following is a reconfigured dramatization of events.			CASE NUMBER There is a number between every number.
	CODE SECTION AND DESCRIPTION (ONE INCIDENT ONLY) When the store clerk wasn't looking, Knight pulled cash from the register. The judge gave him eight years upstate.	MONTH Therefore we can assume this happens between months of summer.	DAY OF THE WEEK On the previous day the clan gathers for a picnic.	YEAR They wear denim and cotton in the style of rural black people in the 1950s.	TIME They're laughter, chatter, multi-scented smoke, and funk burns through the edges of the day.
	LOCATION OF INCIDENT (OR ADDRESS) CITY The sun sets late in Memphis. You can get there from Corinth, Mississippi as late as ten o'clock and still have to wait for the darkness.				

PORTRAIT OF ETHERIDGE KNIGHT IN THE STYLE OF A CRIME REPORT: PART II

V I C T I M	VICTIM'S NAME				RESIDENCE ADDRESS	CITY
	We are not sure whether Knight knew the doctor's name. He was called Doctor, whether he was a physician or a dentist.				STATE—ZIP In the cell's darkness, the code of ancestry breaks.	
	SEE RACE CODE LEGEND-ON TOP OF BACK PAGE	RACE	SEX	DATE OF BIRTH	RELATION TO VICTIM/SUSPECT	
	In the darkness the cells break.	He was called doctor whether he was black or white.	He had a homely wife and a shy nurse. His wife may have also been his nurse.	There are root doctors in foreign countries who believe a man's whole life can be mapped according to his birth day.	Etheridge had come across a witchdoctor in a bar in LA. A guy with a pink scar running like a seam, a dividing line, down the middle of his face. When he asked, Etheridge where he was from, Etheridge took it to mean if he could find his way to Mississippi, he'd find his way.	

PORTRAIT OF ETHERIDGE KNIGHT IN THE STYLE OF A CRIME REPORT: PART II

V I C T I M	VICTIM'S NAME				RESIDENCE ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____ In the cell's darkness, the code of ancestry breaks.
	We are not sure whether Knight knew the doctor's name. He was called Doctor, whether he was a physician or a dentist.				
T H E M	SEE RACE CODE LEGEND ON TOP OF BACK PAGE	RACE	SEX	DATE OF BIRTH	RELATION TO VICTIM/SUSPECT
	In the darkness the cells break.	He was called doctor whether he was black or white.	He had a homely wife and a shy nurse. His wife may have also been his nurse.	There are root doctors in foreign countries who believe a man's whole life can be mapped according to his birth day.	Etheridge had come across a witchdoctor in a bar in LA. A guy with a pink scar running like a seam, a dividing line, down the middle of his face. When he asked, Etheridge where he was from, Etheridge took it to mean if he could find his way to Mississippi, he'd find his way.

CHILDREN &/OR CORPORATIONS

Robin Clarke

Children

are

Corporations

too,

there's no

end to them, like light in Norway

near the solstice

there's no ruling

Nietzsche

Children

& / or

Corporations

Bacchanalian

infants

understand nothing

about suffering

Bacchanalian

Corporations

at their apex

do not apologize

infants

qua infant

do not ask

permission

do not think

to stop

doing

whatever it is

they are doing

except
some Children
like you
like me
have been damaged
some Children
know
about consequences
some Children
are haunted
by consequences
like a cry
turned inward
only an infant
would blow up
the last mountain

to get

what's inside

but the injured ones

know

they

live

there

INFINITE DATES

My-boyfriend-Al-Gore, Marlo would say
all-in-one-breath
to make the Clintons disappear
we didn't know
we didn't know
NAFTA, which is why never to write
syntax, that rigor mortis freezes
the parliament of the farmer
and the chicken and the corn
and the hoe and the dumpster
and the black bear and
the cheetos and the cheetah
each representing themselves
freely in democracy
like some people from hist'ry
you'd have dinner with tonight
my dearly departed
David Foster Wallace
may I summon your prose
for an I-thou relation?
The Bible? an old man asked
at your 900 pages, yes
in the sense of weird science
capable of time travel—
it turns out, we did
start the fire
cows with lesions
that horse in Hickory, Pennsylvania
who will never stand
in whose eye I can't stop seeing

benzene, toluene, thank you
for the speech at Kenyon
This is (in the) Water
This is (Oil)
This is (War)
the dead can't apologize or lie for
your bandanna, the purpose of education
is to fix the past, become cool, no, create options
W/R/T flipping off the hummer—
were there hummers then?
before your suicide?
had we occupied
Iraq for the second time?
Not even half-way
through your Christ birthday
it seems like you predicted everything
I was already failing to wake up to
the nightmare of post-Koch
Detroit winces, like all my elementary
school memories of what's left
when they refine
what's kicked under the seat
in first grade I pooped my pants
and tried to scoop it into the lift-top desk
scrawled with names of boys I can't say
hearts and stars
streaked with feces
what does this have to do with Detroit?
a three story pile of waste petroleum
from Canada cutely known as "petkoch"
you don't raise your hand
don't say what you need

because you're afraid
of being dropped
like an infant called petkoch
on the poorest door stop
that passes for earth
a local drink called boil-o
they put it here
and people live on it

COLOR THEORY

Michelle Gil-Montero

The futurity of blue is to the progressive
present green

But a brittle puddle
Assuming you are present
Though invisible if
You produce no reflection

And faintish
If merely plain
Or dun

In the north of the country, where
Transmission wires assume
Heaps of moss,
All things tenuous
With disuse

White draft horses

Meander wide-

Open shut down

Sugar factories

For worry, a touristy

Pouch of variegated

Match-head

Dolls, hair

Struck dull

MY BOUNDARIES

Awkward part where my proximity lead-lines

Where love halves anticipant steps

To the other room

To lose it

To loosen my unknowing borders

To loot the lying eye

Define my reaches as generously

Traced antlers

Oafish mitt

With shallow sweet spot

Leaking to the grass

Sweetness

Wet-bottomed

Brown paper bag lifted like a rabbit

By the ears

OF RIVERS

Like barging in on a painting where all was left
On an ascending shoreline
To snake along the ultimatum

Meanders, and their ways
We swing from end to end of our own
Furtherance

Were there
A river god

A cold
Waking the blood
Cutting
Clods clouds

Mud to sinuous
Stillness

BABYSITTERS

Lindsay Coleman

Scream into pillows
Move marbles with their minds
Drive with their feet
Leave the kiddie meals at the drive-thru
Smell like SSS and horses
Sing a cappella
Have “really bad” periods
Duct tape our fists
Leave pink retainers on the table
Run over skateboards
Shave their heads
Throw vases down the stairs
Hide us in the back of their station wagons
Stalk boys named Jake Savage
Bury time capsules in the garden
Cheat at Hungry Hungry Hippos
Shoot beer cans with BB guns
Wear glittery danglies
Want to dance dance on the red leather sofas
Come from Montana
Cry in front of their parents
Eat too much chocolate liquor volcano cake
Untangle our necks from goal nets
Get HIV
Can be 60 years old
Suck the marrow from chicken bones
Fall off pogo sticks
See rabid raccoons on the lawn

Leave purple lip marks on the mirror
Win diving championships
Call the FBI
Have names like Sheera
Want to see us shake our “things”
Order hot peppers on the whole pizza
Drink decanters full of blood?
Creep into our rooms at night
Forget our names

BLOSSOMS IN THE DARK

Tarfia Faizullah

If only love could be
like that first slice
of bacon dissolving
on your tongue, or
the short, tight skirt
rolled into your purse
nights you salaamed
your parents goodbye
to arrive at the party
bare-legged, redolent
of cigarettes kissed
with lips reddened
hastily in the dark. Is
love your father's silk
tie you've learned
to let dangle between
your bare breasts?
Is there faith woven
into the skullcap
he unfolds each dawn,
noon, twilight? Or is it
in his neat, shorn nails
scratching skin off
the back of his sun-
black neck? Today,
you asked the Muslim
at the deli to please
slice the ham paper-

thin. Is it faith whose
hand holds back
your hair while you're
sick beside the keg,
skirt riding up?
Tomorrow, you'll love
any man willing
to fling his tongue
into that valley
above your collarbone.
No one can tell you
what to do
with your breath
braiding his throat.
No one can tell you
what to do
with your fingers.
Mother will call
twice while you've got
one hand on his cock,
and you'll consider
picking up.

RANK

Aaron McCollough

waking escapes from a hole somewhere;
eye of one season beside another,
winter and spring of the same old face
turning, not unsurprised, at sun's hail
in the longer morning of this place
and the longer dusk, slow announcing
purlieus, cold sun horn in water.

In a sling as regards time, blindfold
in muslin, utterly swaddled,
cocooned not at a beginning, not
at an ending but in a middle
and a middle again
the damaged bird's dire sidewalk yawning

I open and close upon the day
and open and close
a sharp tree among the blurry ones
blue fir between blue pines

in my rank are the bodies and places,
the feelings and movements,
the words for a total but more
than words or total in my rank,
unpruned,
yet unpruned

state is the late
hour so late?

even with the glare in my eyes,
with some warmth still in the window,
the fan silent, a snow just begun
is my rank a uniform and cleaver

sleep is not the picture of death here
though one way to handle such pictures

RANK

Not undone by length, declining
by terrace. Earth and light ordeal
at the manifold and great grass downstairs
stages of shadow in a day, an instance,
rather an impossible rank,
every heat and moisture on skin or fur,
one fume in the mundane censer,
smooth as you please, water through teeth.

Day arises, or it grows
little threads in dark ground,
lugged beneath a gourd vine
polluted in a parterre by the enemy
but still living, reaching hands uneven,
near numb, at what provened,
whichever terrible noise
has existence in the hole at its base.

This existence and its noise.
Our noise in a tall slow wave
to home in the thalweg,
a curve squared in the moment
with a minor signature,
last of morning's coffee now rank
on the bedside table in the dim room.

UPON WAKING

Katie Ford

When I woke up sighing, perceiving myself in the freeze, perceiving my body in the terrifying orchard, sighing and contending, contending and appearing, disappearing into sighing, sighing of ornament and cargo, pulling down what was broken from twilight and broken from dawn, perceiving what in sleep only strengthened its contention, though I mistook night as healer, sleep as erasure, vespers as lumbering dissolution toward matins, matins a leaf made violet since it hangs askance grapes in sun, since I mistook the leaf for myself, correlating and equating, the determined danger given water and meat, when the mistake pulled down and I woke not arisen but sighing, sighing so the ornaments knew I was nothing to hang upon, no shuttle to loom by, when I could not make a word and the given words of each book failed me into sighing, it was then, to live, I had to say *yes*.

THE FOUR BURNS OF THE SOUL

Whether something outside of us can reach in and affect change, aside or beside, beside or thinly away, thinly and unbearably so, God: this is the whether or whether not we cannot know. Whether to believe there is an unbearable distance or to imagine no distance, thereby feeling a proximity lifting oneself into that which is both imagined and is, or is imagined and is not, or not imagined and is, or not imagined and is not. Those are the choices, four. So that is the pain, that choosing is the only region for us. Here where the fires so constantly alternate their burns.

SONG 2047

Jordan Stempleman

And I'll go see the dead admiral
since I've never seen one before.
Since I've never seen one before
I'll assume the immaculate knows
just what I mean when I say
the black day, peacefulest and plain,
knows it like one friend waiting
for another to primarily arrive.
Would I be wrong to bring fruit
when it's snowing? Would I be wrong to say
it's snowing instead of saying it's sadness
or swatting flies or I miss where we came from,
our time that heats the intermission
for all the things we remain to say?
How I stay are the instructions for how
to enter a room that I've never quite
left. I can be calmer than one eye or another
when you tell me when the time comes.

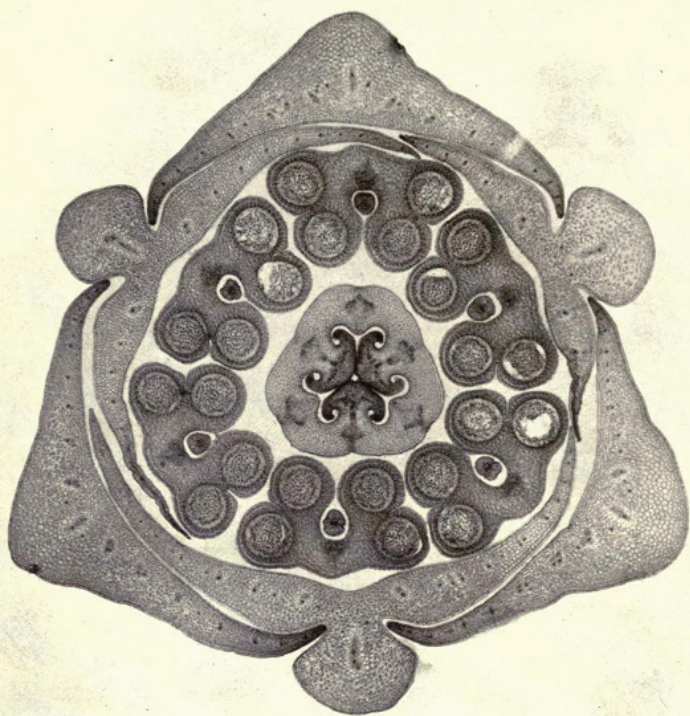


FIG. 39.
SECTION OF LILY BUD.
× 12.

[to face page 133.]

GRATITUDE

Molly Brodak

What a little car, this present second.
How it takes me out of it.
How it keeps me from my
companions.
I'm deaf, I see now,
as History gestures at me madly
through the passenger windows.

I'm humbled.
I think the car is taking me
towards heaven.
I can imagine this
because of my limits.

POOR LISTENER

My childishness
pickled others in a fog.

A sow tried & convicted

for murdering an infant
& hung in the town square with the other crooks,
like that, the way

I used to see others. Follow?
I feel like I'm talking to a child

in a hospital.
Far from my side
of town,

cheap walls weeping from the steam heat.
Broad words here. Iowa-matte. I'm old enough
not to know
what to do

with what I wanted. I'm mean
& too happy for art.
This is my stop,
sweetheart.

INLET

The rigid plains,
men come out pointing.

Natives watch their collar lace flit.
It can't be made.
No one knows
that thinness of thread.

They're cornered, the puritans,
in their own advancing
scruples,

smiting their lardy chests.

And forgetting
a pine stand so charmless,
a pail so half-good,
a bear so upright,
none can tumble down
without artificial grief
from some wrong descendant
reflecting back.

A statesman, likely,
with a coarse fist thinning
in increasingly fine gears.

In his window:
the watery cat chatter,
a whole future country
of forgetting.

Pioneers,
what do you really hope
we'll do with your pain?

A coward
shakes hands with everyone he meets.

ALL THESE CHILDREN LEAVING THE ARCADE

Joshua Zelesnick

What theory launched us toward the parade?
What wicked light shot its angle
toward our gaze? It's just a tango,
all these children leaving the arcade
with stuttered steps and marching
toward the parade. Ascending
above the market place, descending
all these children weary and afraid.
What about the sounds, the images on screens?
Too much flashing light can lead
a child insane. These children feed
off things that move, off guts and bloody scenes,
it's just a tango. Marching wounded toward the parade
all these children leaving the arcade.

HERE ARE SOME PROBLEMS I HAVE WITH YOUR WIFE

Josh Bell

I.

She's a lot more fluent in Portuguese
than she used to be. Holds hands with all
my ex-girlfriends, who afterward seem
so much taller. And later, as I blew out
my candles, she said to those gathered, I'll bet
he wished to be sodomized by thieves.
Your wife comes from a family of thieves.
Her mother taught her never to confuse
sex with the doing of one's taxes. I'll get
to her father later. Her father is a series
of furnaces. About your wife's novel I wrote,
friends, this is the worst birthday party, ever.
She took it as a compliment. Love, kill,
betray, deify, vote for, nap with, or bury alive?

II.

She changed her telephone number.
She doesn't have any birds inside of her.
Her idea becomes flesh by early afternoon.
When I first read your wife's new memoir,
Sir, it felt like watching the lighthouse
go dark, like doing inventory, finding one
planet missing. No doubt your wife knows

very well which planet. I look forward to your next dinner party, where I may sample from the catered board, ask your wife about said memoir. Last time I read it, I awoke to find myself burning heretics. I guess what it is, is that probably your wife puts her allotted birds inside of other people.

III.

Your wife's police are a very special kind of police. They fingereth the apple of mine eye, and there are way too many testicles to count. Likewise, this is a strange looking bed. And this is a magic handkerchief. You wish it were 18 horseflies. You wish your wife's police were far more brutal. Me, I never bought the premise that your wife was ever small, but if I did, I wouldn't take it personally. I'm not a nest of living wig-hair, nor baby-bits, nor 18 flies pouring from the mouth of whoever's hiding in this weird new bed with me. Come out, Inflatabilium. Don't make me call your wife's police.

PENULTIMATE LETTER TO YOUR WIFE

Hetero-telepath, blister of num-num, first the thumb-suck, and then the codicil, and down the back-stairs come to me, first time voter, bones in Delta formation, come louche as dinosaur and please unconscious, make of thyself unconscious thing please, aka insensate, aka The Money-Truck, unseen by husband, cymbalist, go out of your way for me, like a Quaker, rubber bunny in that ugly muffin-hat or nothing but your hair-sleeves, abeat about your temple as in flags, excuse me I meant bunny-rubber, and all in a sleepwalk, no one should keep that many trout, bus-girl, tooth-brush holder, and to a longsome steely brig of moonlight come, raging cohort, vivisect for hollyhock, also that's a prayer mat not a wedding dress, knife and fork you, your imagination it ramifies, not anymore a wedding dress, a lien against my holdings is your breathing, your cities engulfed in strife, you gave your blood away to build your many children, and corkscrew, wee dreadnought, I'm literally spanking the kitchen, Andalusia, infundibula, nice assonance, that nostalgia you're feeling is just my inner vacuum, though everyone's stealing my tools now, and my books, and drug yourself if need to, I don't want to be the one who drugs you this time, why won't you be proactive, sister of the pharmacist, becoming as a library, bring that dead body of yours along with you like a bedroll, into the yard, out behind your marital address, where I'm becoming a library, I've got an invisible baby that needs to take a shape in blood, outside now so you can use your fascist voice, jury of chipmunk, you and I will sleep on your dead body, hard to see two people sleeping on a dead body which belongs to one of the sleepers who also sleeps upon it, but hey it sometimes happens, like an underwater library I can't do anything about it, your children dreaming with their little faces on lock down, your husband using up

all the Marxism, plus I think your children get their faces from his face, too bad for you, not going to send your face forward this time around, this was going to be a picnic, but it's an archaeological exhibit, yes I'm finally thinking quaquaversally, so come to the lean-to, un-clip that shadow, investment banker, longshoremistress, invisible baby, invisible baby in your blood.

HERE ARE SOME PROBLEMS I HAVE WITH YOUR WIFE

I.

She's a successful deep-sea mining
operation. A traffic record so clean
you could wash a human heart with it.
When I read your wife's poems, I understand
that it's just a single, murderous fish
hiding inside of me, and not millions
of tiny sperm, as biology holds out. Same
thing goes for missiles and economics
in which little ever rhymes. I once met
a girl who, in your wife's company, went
from socialism to only being turned on
by images of Santa Claus. I know
how that goes. Spiny dorsal fin and torched
Xmas stocking. Poetry's not for everyone.

II.

I object to the way she has peopled
the earth. When I pull her hair, it spools
hurtless from her scalp, like dental floss.
In the broader world, authorities still try
to outlaw bestiality, and the days all pass,
lit as if adult films, yet with surprisingly
good acting. If you're what I'm going to have
as my disciple, your wife once said to me,
then what's my body and my blood

supposed to be? Ok then, but how would you've replied? When shy in public stalls and unable to urinate, I breathe deeply, imagine your wife, singing. This bliss shut to animals. No codpiece after Labor Day.

III.

I imagine, at some point, I read a book your wife didn't write. Not the Bible, maybe, but a kind of bible. Or maybe not even a book, but someone's diary other than your wife's diary. Have you ever read your wife's diary? Well I'm not ready to recommend it. I'm alone, reading in bed, when your wife's arm bursts through the grave of my chest, as if buried in me prematurely, then all of her, shooting through me, a black firework, into the ceiling. It's like how it was always rain, but I kept receiving it as milk, and it's also the way I wound up written out of everything.

CHAMPAGNE DAWN

Nick Twemlow

Cassandra wrote
To tell me
That my
“Problem
With chicks
Is over,”
& I jumped out of
My chair
& Ran
To the picture
Window
In the living
Room,
Threw open
The curtains,
And saw
My neighbor
Hacking
His rake
At the still-
Fluttering
Body
Of a
Barred
Owl.

IN ARREARS

This life, unlike
The others,
Spends itself
In arrears, lost
In the pause,
Gentrified.
Like an infection
You work to codify:
Your coffee cup
Starts to talk
Back to you,
Confirms
Your obsolescence.
Sweet meniscus tear
In the sky
Where moon's rapeseed
Stows away.
I've poured
Vatic shale
Down
My neon throat;
An ancient redwood
Took root
In me.
I've compared thee
To autumnal
Leaves wired
To blow through
The grid
While I keep time

By counting accidents
Flowering across
The map of my commute
To work,
As winter collapses
All at once
All over the map,
Amplifying time
Takes so long
To endure,
The road realigns
After I snap
The lines
Inward toward
Dust.

SENSING OWLS

Daniel Coudriet

My pants eat things
& I miss them.
High enough the chimney
becomes a window
in reflection.
No matter the cost
of the glass,
the museum
& I am here
inside my Spanish self
my teeth softening
into several tongues.
My tongue is a tooth.
I miss walking more
than anything
with you, the bed
trying to eat
children of a certain
age. If your pillow
comes to life what else
would you do?
Kill it with a knife
& sleep on what
you killed?
If your wooden spider
is thin you feed it.
If the cat's eye closes
she's sensing owls.

I recognize responsibilities
in graffiti.

These are not my pants.

The museum people
have taken them.

Do you lick your glasses
still as you inventory?

Bent heart. Burnt
heart. Heart getting bent.

LOVE POEM

Allyson Paty

when I button your shirt the thought that you are a man
with a chest I cannot
inhabit
not yours or another chest like it & the placket on the left
is where the buttons are sewn
so it's easy to face
& dress you
day after day you dress yourself of course when I do
it's to pantomime
devotion
(itself an act
of devotion) in a world
where the clothes available nod to a world
where a man is dressed
where buttoning
is work
for a woman to do on a man & from this shirt
& all shirts & things I have bought I know mystery

is alive like someone's
idea of god
even the single button how to think of the plastic
its roundness or the holes
swirl of color to make the plastic
look like horn
I've been given the idea
of machinery & material & human work nothing
specific as the fact
of this one shirt (it is here & present) on your body the body I touch
& live beside
like any god this binds me
to the knowledge that my knowledge is made incomplete
I am wrong
when I think my love
could lift you your body or mine like a single stone
from the words & histories that give
shape & weight
in a day where light
brings clear empty space to walk through

THE MARK ON THE WALL

Maurice Manning

I'd heard it was Kenny Downs who made it—
maybe an epitaph or an oath,
a kind of declaration—scratched
in letters a hand-span high
and in plain print along the edge
of the slab cap to the loading dock
that stood like a monument between
the shorn bed where the siding had been
and the fallen beams and rubble piled
behind, which had been a warehouse once
that received pumps and implements
from the north and stoves from a southern foundry,
heavy, awkward items to keep.
Ritchie the Rat, it read, with the dash
of a tail scraped after the t,
as if a boy named Ritchie had done
some deed, an ill-deed, a boy
like Kenny Downs would probably
admire. It must have been heroic
whatever Ritchie did or what
he must have stood for then—a rage
against some code or custom that drew
unnecessary lines around
a boy's life, especially,
a poor boy in a small town
like the one that Kenny knew. His life
was circumscribed far more than mine,
but we shared the smaller shames—for a time

he had two pairs of pants and one pair
of shoes he held together with glue;
my shoes were of similar fashion,
and both of us were whipped one time
for stealing a bottle of glue from the school.
There was a lesson I learned in that:
invention isn't taught, and worse,
it shall be punished. That is the meaning
of Kenny's slogan, Ritchie the Rat—
he'd done it with a railroad spike,
a primitive but useful tool.
I've thought how brave it is, the desire
to leave a mark; and then I've thought
Kenny had made a mark for Ritchie,
a boy unknown to me, a legend
I've wondered if Kenny Downs invented,
though the mark remains, indelible.
I make one, too, for both of them.

JONQUILS

Micah Bateman

Wasn't it just warm? Didn't the jonquils just shock the lawn?
Now jaundice spreads across it like the gauze we used to wrap our
wounds . . .

Had we not reddened the cloth we would've been thought false.
Had we not returned at all we would've been thought lost,

Orphan points on a forgotten grid where we stand empty of course
If course is passage through where we desire to hunt

As cats tracking a bird: a metonym for composition
We know we shouldn't, what? Where we speak

Listlessly, a little winsome in our wistfulness,
A tracking poll plotting the use of our words in the fabled table

We know to be augury, we know to be psalm and psalm and again.
Silent of method, alms for masses of poverty-stricken, thought?

We couldn't keep secret. If we were calm and if not we lunged toward
An understanding of the day's weather like a scholarly report

On The Pietà eroded away by time on display. Could time be an infinite
duration event
We'd know it by the instrument and that our records proved

Erroneous. Walk: day. Walked: night. Knighted: song, wrongfully,
There but for a moment of peace Peaseblossom showed

His moony tenor to be a scarce virtue like a small sliver of a star
Rescuing night from blackface, its terrible minstrelsy, dances

Hewn to swaying, a tree above of us splintering into coffins—its
offering.

Perilous are the doors whose opening opposes us, such

Darkroom negatives in air's chemical womb grown misshapen as
fantasies

En voyage, en voyage, from minds' dark to the dark of the closet floor

Whose space gives itself for forced intimacy we knew once as Seven
Minutes in Heaven

I.e. timed eternity. What else is space but not our mass? How else

Can space apportion itself if we are intractable as the scalpel traversing
Alien integuments? So we kiss. So we die a little. The hems of coats
brush our hair

Sending fibers skyward—static, lightning, storm, summer beginning.
Swatch is the materialized idea of color, how else to feel red,

The hue imagined to be bird in the cat's eye,
Ordinated by a point, a predator weaving trajectories until his hunger
strikes.

For a moment—weightless. A pound's both flesh and currency
And freedom's empty of pocket but only light.

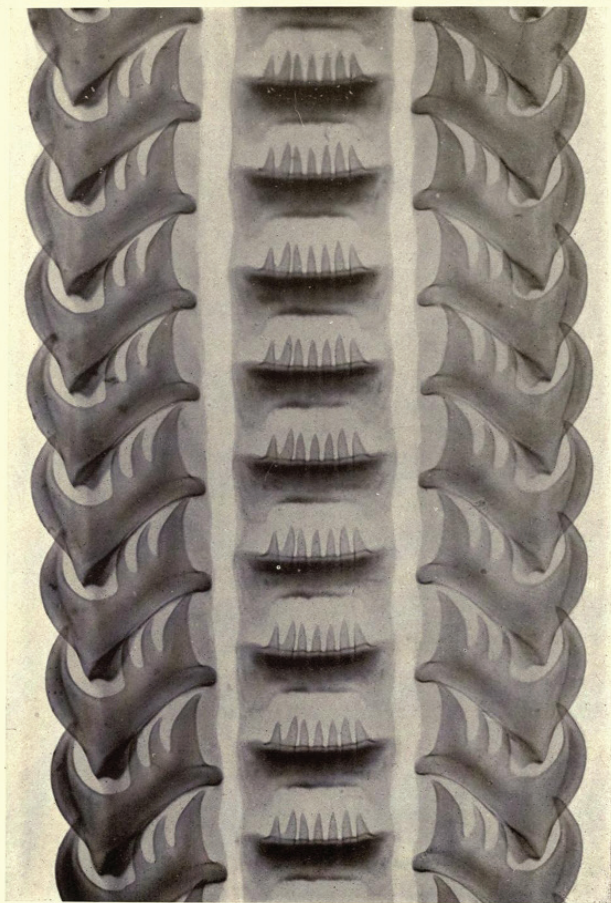


FIG. 12.
RADULA OF WHELK.
× 60.

[to face page 57.]

TWIN VESSELS

Gale Marie Thompson

I don't know what I'm supposed to dial into
The nation, museum
the institution

I stick the moon onto my bedroom wall
and look at photographs
to convince my brain of faces,
of page marks

And the woman there
is heavy-collared and plain
in her sewing

her pier-glass
thighs plodding in half sleep

She looks up from the cover of the book
She asks me for another container
but I'm thinking of nonsense now

The old forgetting and underfeeding
Some weakless encounter
with the constant present

Knowing what I know now
I could be better
I could be a Shaker
and create things with my own gender

Mistaking wandering
for upwards

Rehearsing in advance
this disappearance

MIDDLING

: Burrowing how you name me. Pregnant, meaning *walled-in*. You said the skies were changeable. I felt it in the next room.

: Because Berryman said, “all has pointed to HERE.” Because the baby eggplant outside already has a worm that bore its way through. Because I don’t ever feel safe.

: What are your feelings toward boxes?

: My lungs are metallic when I wake, this blanket a cape full of my ashes. The skyline is a dirty haze, meals in the early hours.

: It hadn't occurred to me that I am *adamant*, that I am *vicious*. That if you aren't dead-on I'll make you dead-on. Every meal is a disappointment, this habit to swallow lost.

: How long have you been trying to lose weight?

: I'm not looking at this leaf unless you're watching me look at this leaf. What to diffuse, to implode (this obligation). Do I know you in this language or do I *know you*?

: Situated, not located. Think of: deep pockets, muffled, some straining star. The ocean, scale-filled and buckling.

: Did you fast before coming here?

: An animal scrapes against the metal roof and the cat goes mad.

: The tea olive outside has a hidden smell, and no flowers to spot or rub up against. A family of owls and the train speak up at the same time.

: So what if I taste blood in my lungs in the cold. Over a thousand years ago, a group of monks saw fire coming from the moon and it was a meteor all along.

TRANSACTION HISTORY 5

Donna Stonecipher

1.

If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, I wouldn't have believed it: under the blue sky, a small steamroller imprinting the sand over and over with an advertisement for a jar of peanut butter. We had waited so long for summer, and all during that long, hot July and August we were still waiting. The woman with her hair full of hairpins drove cautiously down the hairpin curves to the town.

2.

The photograph of grains of sand magnified two hundred times revealed microscopic works of art — gold, rose, opalescent spirals, gaskets, worlds — where we had expected only a consoling beige monotony, the monotony we counted on when we came to the sea with our troubles to be consoled. Our troubles, too, were like works of art: they had been shaped lovingly over time.

3.

Representations of the sea can have a drenching effect on the landlocked. A room full of TVs playing a video of the ocean she accidentally walked into in an art museum in a landlocked land made her seasick — seasick like lovesick. If desire does spiral in nauseating waves, what are we to make of the erotic aporia of the sailor, who is always falling backwards from his decks into the sea?



4.

It is not possible to map a coastline, because the closer you zoom in, the more complexly intricate is the tracery of the coves and jetties, the sandbars all sliding off the map to be swallowed up by the great Undepictable. Each day at the beach we searched the sky for signs of summer, but all we saw were little airplanes towing banners exhorting us to enjoy an expensive brand of ice cream.

5.

As the melting chocolate case slid off my vanilla ice cream bar, you reached out a hand to rescue it, and the white clouds billowed for a moment over the rooftops. We wondered if the photograph of magnified sand grains was moving through the internet as it moved through our minds, called up and then abandoned, remembered and then forgotten, reified and liquidated. Just like our troubles.

6.

Even the napkins we had been given with the ice cream were printed with ads for a soft drink we'd never heard of. You said it couldn't hurt to buy just one to try it, and then I started an argument about your susceptibility to such siren songs. By the time we made it back to our spot on the beach, the peanut butter jars were gone, and the intoxicating monotony of the sand was at last undeniable.

TO CAROLYN BLESSING

Andy Stallings

There is
in the song of
this room
a held note
that is a hole
torn in the air &
around it falls
all boundary we
derive of such as
a mouth & just
as inelegant as
gaped the skin
of song for one
second sliced
to expose
a clarity like
epiphany recoiling
at the heart of
the world revealing
a jolt or some
fog or an
oscillation which
nails us to its
wing
there is
in the story of
the spike of
your vein an

apology I've owed
a window
askew in the
music of dying
that locates but
does not fasten
or fix a threshold
diminishing into
addiction's simple
disruption of
flux its ceasing
gesture that
starts with an
open gate & ends
with an open
gate & no one
around
there is
in this city some-
where a tower
of song down
a street we've
forgotten about
until now a
tower of song
in this city but I
I've never cared
for abundance
never kept
a breath past
necessary coursing
through me as

long as light
lasts or until
such light
shall arise
there is
at the heart of
the world this brim
terrain serene
beneath the blue
of overdose but
teeming &
from it must
emerge what David
Antin calls
narrative “the
representation
of the confrontation
of the desiring
subject with the
threat or promise of
transformation” but
I remember that
last word always
as “annihilation”
& in it hear
“addiction” though
what do I know
Carolyn
about annihilation
about addiction’s
specific stasis
or silence or

absence of plot
according to Antin “any
transformation no
matter how promising
contains the threat of
destroying its desiring
subject in the
magnitude of
fulfillment” according
to Antin “all self
is built over the
threat of change
every change
creates a fracture
between successive
subject states that
narrative attempts
& fails to heal
the self is formed
over these cracks”
when Hunter died
I read every word
Antin wrote about
narrative believing
I’d discovered a key
to addiction an addict
I figured
following the relatively
simple withdrawal
from physical addiction
need only restructure
narrative so that it

bridged the addicted
subject state to the
recovering subject
state & so long as
narrative held
voilà
annihilation averted
addiction solved
as though narrative
were any more
stable than clarity
say or what we
think of as under-
standing but I was
thinking of Hunter
thinking of my
father thinking
of students & friends
who never reveal
their addiction
but whom I would
somehow identify
anyhow & salvage
with narrative
I was thinking of
the self as continuous
but the self is
not continuous
it is emergent
insofar as it exists
the self exists in
discrete eruptions

of story “we tell
ourselves stories in
order to live”
Joan Didion
famously wrote
less famously
missing the point
since the stories that
help us to see
ourselves as living
make death the
defining feature
of the living
self even as
our telling them
insists on life
as necessary
emergency
narrative doesn’t
solve addiction
it makes it possible
in this context
it’s not more
meaningful to
say (Cendrars) “the
life I’ve led
keeps me from
suicide” than
to say “the life
I’ve led won’t
keep you from
suicide” or “the

life I've led is
suicide" what
aren't we
dying of
constantly
or as Zach
said after
his diagnosis
this only confirms
what we've always
known about living
this changes
nothing
very well
here is the story
I've always known
about addiction
a man with five
children a heroin
addict abandons
his job as a
passenger train
line cook as soon
as the children
leave with their
mother to visit
her family &
spends the week
of their absence
loaded he tells
his family when they
return that he's

quit his job so as
not to be away
from home so
often the man
gets clean the next
winter goes
to college lands
a job puts the kids
through college too
32 years later
he walks out
one night
& gets loaded
then he does it again
the third time the
children's mother
calls each of them
to tell them they've
separated & that
she doesn't know
where their father
is or whether
he's alive or
dead if there's
a difference
also there is
the story I'd
like to tell
about addiction
in this one
following a friend's
overdose I walk

along all the holiday
streets of the city
I walk beside
the Mississippi &
watch the refinery
lights on the opposite
shore I reach for
snowflakes warm
my hands & catching
the air's current
in a moment of
transit still
electric I
know it's late but
lit kitchen windows
suit me more than
any story I've
heard & silence
around me only
makes me want to
shout hello
I love you
every bit & every
one of you
to touch your
shoulders & tuck
your hair & tell you
why this life is
joyful still it
will fill you up
it will be alright
when we die

this is the story
I'd like to tell
in which addiction
is not better
or worse than
driving a car
or making a
drawing for
instance but
there is
another story
still
a boy & a girl
there are hundreds
of versions the
story is told
all over the world
a boy & a girl
are alone in a house
the house is built
on the edge of
a woods
the woods are
vast & magic
it is nearly dark
the house or the
woods or the boy
& girl are under
a spell or the
house is surrounded
by wolves always
the boy & the

girl are alone
just before night
falls the girl
becomes ill
her illness is sudden &
total she will not
make it till dawn
without medicine
town of course
is through the woods
though she forbids
his leaving the boy
loves his sister
fears her dying
& leaves
what happens to
him makes
little difference
thereafter
he is baked
in a pie he is
eaten by wolves
he makes it to town
& buys medicine
he never returns
sometime during
the night the girl
awakens to find
they are separated
either separation is
death for them
or she has magically

healed or gathering
her strength she
opens the door
& enters the clearing
& here all versions
agree
she runs to the woods
she runs to the woods
she runs to the woods
she runs to the woods
there is no one there
to help her

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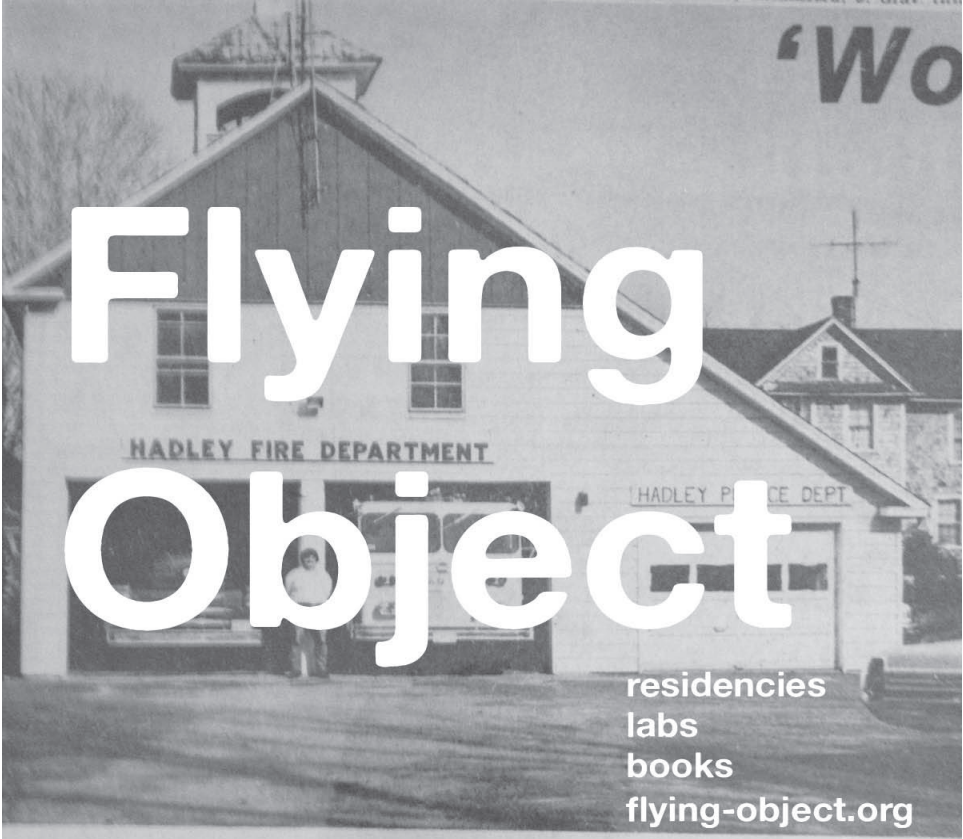
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FIRE DEPARTMENT Lt. Edward Dudkiewicz in front of Hadley's public safety quarters.

The single room designated as the police department is jammed with filing cabinets, shelves of official forms and police equipment.

'There's no room to interrogate or interview anyone,' said Sgt. Michael Majewski. 'The chief has one desk that everyone and his brother uses. There's not even room for a bulletin board.'

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